

Testimony before Senate Judiciary Committee, February 10, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Doris Fischer. I live in Sheridan, Montana.

I speak today for myself, and for my deceased partner Richard.

Richard died of Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) ^{at the age of 77.} Despite the best hospice and palliative care, he experienced great pain in his final weeks. Most acute were his terrifying episodes of feeling like he was suffocating, as his ability to breathe steadily dwindled. He also described feeling trapped, chained to the bed, stuck to the chair as he lost his ability to move independently. He had frequent and horrific leg cramps that lasted nearly an hour each time, despite massage and pain medication.

Richard died in 2009, just months before the Montana Supreme Court issued the Baxter decision, ruling that nothing in Montana law prohibits physician aid in dying. Richard wanted, but didn't have, this end-of-life choice. We in Montana now do. Having this choice gives me peace of mind.

For those who fear that the right to access aid in dying will somehow be abused, SB 202 offers a common sense solution. It provides a protocol for terminally ill patients and their doctors to follow. It offers protection for everyone.

Please vote YES on SB 202.